

Who can overcome violence in Georgia?

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Military actions usually come to an end either when one of the belligerents arrives at the ultimate victory, or when both belligerents decide to make peace, or when a third force arises in order to make the belligerents seek peaceful resolution of the discord. Today the events in Georgia testify to an obvious war. This war is not merely a traditional one, i.e. that of armed forces. Warfare of no lesser importance is taking place in the information space in pursuit of revealing the information which is more beneficial to one of the militants. Who could (should) stop this bloodshed and nonsensical killing of innocent people?

The case that one of the militants will arrive at a convincing ultimate victory, i.e., will destroy the opponent, as of now seems unrealistic primarily due to the fact that the Georgian army is physically incapable of destroying the Russian forces, which are several tens of times the size of the former. On the other hand, it is most unlikely that Russia itself will resort to extreme measures, viz., the destruction of Georgia as a state, which would inevitably give rise to the response of other states of the world and could lead to, if not the third world war, then to a large-scale military conflict, a quite harmful one to Russia.

As an outcome of the shooting war, conciliation cannot be considered a great prospect either, especially having in mind voluntary conciliation and burying in the past recriminatory insults. It is hard to expect that, having failed to reach a compromise for over a decade, the sides could manage to do so in a few days. In this sense a truce would become nothing but a prolongation of the agony, which would not resolve the conflict and would only postpone its resolution. However, even the truce can hardly be imagined without a third party intervention.

It looks like the conflict in Georgia may be stopped and moreover, the existing status quo may be changed only given the assistance of the international community. Russians and Georgians themselves cannot agree with each other, even though attempts to do so, at least from the Georgian side, have been made for many years. So far there have been no results. One could list a substantial number of reasons why conflicts with Abkhazia and South Ossetia are so complicated. The labyrinth of ethnic disagreements, historical grievances, geopolitical ambitions and economic goals is too confusing for Georgians, Russians, Abkhazians and Ossetians who all have been wandering in it for a long time.

Up till now the international community has not really responded to the conflict. Diplomatic announcements and pleas to cease fire and sit down at the negotiations table are not to be counted due to the virtual absence of real effect. It is hard to believe that a Georgian would agree to lay down his arms and stop fighting to entrust the destiny of the freedom and honour of his people and country to the UN Security Council, one of whose members is Russia... Yet it is the international community who is the only actor capable of and obliged to stop the war. This has to be done within the few following days; otherwise Georgia might not only face the loss of part of its territories and death of hundreds of soldiers, but also suffer a humanitarian catastrophe, which might end up in the state disappearing from the map of the world. Although Russia claims that it bombs only strategic and military objects in Georgia, not every rocket falls where it is directed. The destruction of major ports, air ports, roads and factories is not only a blow to the military power of the enemy, but also poses danger to the lives of all civil inhabitants of the country.

Both the United Nations and the European Union claim that they advocate international peace, peaceful populace and seek to punish any aggressors. Unfortunately, the world has repeatedly seen that good intentions remain intentions. While the international community engages in lengthy negotiations in New York or Brussels, innocent inhabitants die, schools and hospitals are destroyed, and the image of the international community itself suffers a particularly painful blow. I think that many Georgians and even Ossetians ask themselves whether it is worth to entrust their destiny to the hands of those who in a week merely manage to announce a pile of declarations, but do not make any practically useful steps.

It is possible that by breaking into Tskhinvali, Georgians essentially sought to draw the attention of the international community and thus make it get down to the resolution of the long-standing problem. Assessing the situation in Georgia, one can argue that only the introduction of peace enforcement forces may give stimulus to the peaceful resolution of conflict. In a situation where „peace“ is created and maintained by one of the belligerents, one can hardly expect that both sides will come away with a positive outcome. This is perhaps the most significant reason in allowing one to maintain that the international peace enforcement and, in the course of time, peacekeeping forces, have to be introduced to Georgia. Another important reason to justify this step is the image and status of the international community itself. Both the United Nations and the European Union have long been criticized for inefficiency in ensuring the declared goal of world peace. One more failure of the international community to demonstrate that it is a serious guarantor of peace and stability, will result not only in another blow to the credibility of the UN and the EU, but will also prove the statement that the world still resides in the *realpolitik* and Cold War politics. This world has no room for values and morale, while selfish interests based on the principle „an eye for an eye“ are pursued. To put it simply, we still bear existence in the

environment „everybody's war against everybody“ and can fall victim to a greater and stronger aggressor at any time. No room is left for trust and collaboration, yet fear, uncertainty, and distrust prevail.

Finally, today the events in the battlefield are not the only factor determining the attitude towards the problem. Information coming from that battlefield is a factor of similar, if not greater, weight and importance. For example, Russia is disseminating information through all possible channels that Georgia carries out an act of genocide i.e., kills peaceful Ossetians, in South Ossetia. If we regarded the situation exclusively from the viewpoint of the Russian mass media, Georgia would appear as the greatest military aggressor and the worst state in the world. Similarly, assessment of the events based exclusively on Georgian information would provide a totally different view. Yet neither perspective would be objective and just. Therefore, the need to assess the situation objectively is the third argument in favour of the introduction of international peace enforcement and peacekeeping forces. From this viewpoint the trip of Petras Vaitiekunas, Lithuanian Foreign Minister, to Georgia was a proper and much needed step, as it is much easier to assess the situation based on facts obtained directly on-site rather than on the subjective mass media. However, even the information provided by Foreign Minister cannot be absolutely reliable, since he is not involved in direct military actions and cannot say whether Georgian combatants do kill peaceful Ossetians, whether there are any „dark-skinned and fair-haired“ among the defeated Georgians, as claimed by Eduard Kokoity, and whether Russian troops have really crossed the South Ossetia border or not. Only international peacemakers could answer these questions.

In order to send an international peacekeeping mission to Georgia, the international community has to reach an agreement. So far there is none. Today the main task for Lithuania, which presents itself as Georgia's representative and advocate in the West, is to urge this agreement by all possible means. It may well be that the upcoming decision of the international community will determine the future of Georgia. In the light of Russia's controversies (and, according to the Russian envoy to the UN, even victimization), only a firm position of the West may recover confidence and re-establish peace. If such agreement is not to be achieved, one is in for hit-or-miss blackmail, brute force, and callous selfishness.